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AUTHOR	Anderson, Valerie; Roit, Marsha
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ABSTRACT

This report explores the use of reading comprehension instruction as a gateway for developing oral-language proficiency in language-minority students. Based on classroom observations, analyses of videotapes of literacy teaching sessions, conversations with teachers and administrators, and analyses of teaching demonstration lessons, six competencies were identified that could be developed in students to increase both reading comprehension and language development. These competencies would enable students to: use the English language with flexibility; use less-imageable basic vocabulary; consider larger contexts; determine importance and unimportance of aspects of text; elaborate responses; and engage in natural conversations. A discussion of these competencies is followed by 10 suggestions for teaching them that draw upon the primary language, cognitive strengths, and social skills of language-minority students. Suggested teaching activities include: shared reading; vocabulary networking; expanding contexts; predicting; encouraging the use of imagery; teaching about text structure; questioning; identifying problems and sharing strategies; text explaining; arranging for conversational opportunities; and using culturally familiar informational texts. Recommendations for implementing these instructional activities by grade are included. (Contains 65 references.) (Author/LR)

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Valerie Anderson
Centre for Applied Cognitive Science
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Marsha Roit
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November 1994

Center for the Study of Reading

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Abstract

Despite suggestions from research to the contrary, developing oral-language proficiency in language-minority students often takes precedence over reading comprehension. This report explores the use of reading comprehension instruction as a gateway for developing oral language in language-minority students. Based on classroom observations, analyses of videotapes of literacy teaching sessions, conversations with teachers and administrators, and analyses of demonstration lessons, six prevalent instructional issues, defined as competencies, were identified that could be developed in students to increase both reading comprehension and language development. These include the ability to use the English language with flexibility, to use less-imageable basic vocabulary, to consider larger contexts, to determine importance and unimportance of aspects of text, to elaborate responses, and to engage in natural conversations. A discussion of these competencies is followed by a set of suggestions for teaching them that draw upon the primary language, cognitive strengths, and social skills of language-minority students. Although these teaching suggestions focus on the development of reading comprehension, they also provide natural opportunities for students to increase their understanding and use of English. Suggested teaching activities include: shared reading; vocabulary networking; expanding contexts; predicting; encouraging the use of imagery; teaching about text structures; questioning, identifying problems, and sharing strategies; text explaining; arranging for conversational opportunities; and using culturally familiar informational texts. Recommendations for implementing these instructional activities by grade level are included.

LINKING READING COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION TO LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR LANGUAGE-MINORITY STUDENTS

For some time, there have been concerns about the common practice of delaying reading comprehension instruction for language-minority students until they are fluent in oral English. Although a number of educators feel that this delay is not a good idea (e.g., Goodman, Goodman, & Flores, 1979), a review of the literature produced only a handful of articles on how to teach these students to understand what they read. This is in sharp contrast to the wealth of research on how to teach them to understand and use oral English. Weber (1991) has confirmed that the research on bilingual programs has focused on spoken English proficiency.

Opinions about teaching language-minority students are strong and diverse. Many of the controversies center on English oral-language development. Instructionally, a common argument seems to be whether language-minority students should be taught in their first language and English or in English only. In either case, however, many educators (e.g., Wong Fillmore & Valadez, 1986) believe that students must be fluent in oral English before they can learn to read it. Weber (1991) argued that this opinion is based on a traditional belief that progress in reading is dependent on spoken language, a belief "supported by mechanistic principles of language learning and reinforced by a narrow conception of reading as translating symbols to speech" (p. 101). The practical result of the belief is that, for many students, instruction in reading comprehension is frequently minimized or delayed in favor of instructional efforts toward oral-language proficiency.

Goodman et al. (1979) suggested that reading in English can start when students begin to show a receptive understanding of English, especially if they are literate in their first language. Language-minority students seem to be able to learn oral and written language at the same time (Elley, 1981). Similar to many people learning a new language, these students may be reticent to speak in the new language even though they have some understanding of it. Because it is probable that the students are equally receptive to written English, it seems reasonable that reading instruction should start earlier than is currently found in practice.

The potential reciprocity between learning to read and reading to learn has strong implications for developing oral language in language-minority students. Barrera (1983) noted that children learn to read in their second language before oral fluency develops. She substantiates the relationship between reading and language by pointing out that the students are not limited by their oral language and that it is likely that they learn English by reading in context. Despite these observations, practitioners to date have not generally taken advantage of this important reciprocity (Weber, 1991).

Over the past seven years, we have been working extensively in the United States and Canada in classrooms that have high percentages of language-minority students. In the United States, we have observed students in grades 1 through 6 and, in Canada, grades 6 through 8. The students have been from virtually every culture, with larger proportions of Hispanic, East Indian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Iranian, Greek, Italian, and West Indian students, the latter from several language backgrounds. Our efforts have focused on helping teachers provide students with strategy instruction in reading comprehension (Anderson, 1992; Anderson & Roit, 1990, 1993). A natural outcome of this work has been the informal gathering of information concerning instructional issues related to teaching these students to read. As a result of conversations with teachers and administrators, classroom observations of literacy teaching, teaching demonstrations, and analyses of videotaped teaching sessions, we have identified six prevalent instructional issues related to reading comprehension and, in turn, to language development. We present these issues as competencies that, when developed in students, increase both their understanding of text and oral-language proficiency. The competencies are the ability to use the

English language with flexibility, to use less-imageable basic vocabulary, to consider larger contexts, to determine importance and unimportance of aspects of text, to elaborate responses, and to engage in natural conversations.

We feel that teaching these competencies through the use of text has distinct advantages over dealing with them simply on an oral basis. Spoken language is fleeting and inconsistent over time. Text, by contrast, is stable and does not pass the learner by. When text is used, the learner can reread, reflect, and reconsider that which is to be learned in its original and complete form.

This report focuses on reading comprehension as a gateway to language development rather than on proficient language as a prerequisite to reading. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of a reading emphasis is that comprehension instruction with language-minority students is largely untouched, certainly unsettled, and thus open to instructional innovation (Weber, 1991).

Each competency is described below. Although each is discussed separately for purposes of clarity, we realize that they are all interrelated. Because these competencies are basic to full understanding of text, the need for them is common to both English-speaking poor readers and language-minority students. We have not dealt with decoding. There is currently a plethora of information on providing students with phonemic awareness and phonics that is applicable to these students (for a review, see Adams, 1990). As in any group of learners, some language-minority students may have decoding difficulties but, generally speaking, comprehension difficulties are more widespread, severe, and difficult to deal with instructionally. More important, solutions to comprehension problems have a more direct bearing on language development.

The discussion of the competencies is followed by 10 suggestions for teaching them. We have made no attempt to precisely fit suggestions to individual competencies in the way one might treat isolated skills. To do so would be out of step with current conceptions of teaching and learning (e.g., Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1989; Brown & Campione, 1990; Froese, 1991; Goodman, 1986; Marshall, 1989). We offer a variety of interrelated activities, each of which could help language-minority students meet many of their reading and language needs in a variety of ways.

Instructional Competencies

1. Using English with flexibility. Anyone learning a new language feels pretty good when she or he figures out *one* way to say something in it. The ability to say something in more than one way is often initially beyond the learner. Consequently, language-minority students may be able to answer comprehension questions in English, but their answers are frequently verbatim from the text. They are able to find words in the text that correspond to those in a question because they decode or recognize some of those words, but they may not have the slightest idea what their answers mean. They also may have difficulty putting what they read into their own words, either because they do not understand the English material or are not yet able to generate alternative ways to express what they do understand. Early reading programs that emphasize highly controlled sentences and vocabulary may, in fact, foster language inflexibility. It could also be fostered by teaching in which students are expected to respond only in English. Numerous researchers (e.g., Cole & Griffen, 1987; Cummins, 1989; Goldman, Reyes, & Varnhagen, 1984; Lee, 1984; Moll, 1994) contend that allowing children to use their first, or heritage language to respond enhances second-language learning. Furthermore, it does not appear to matter whether the teacher is proficient in the first languages of his or her students for the students' use of heritage languages to be effective.

2. Using less-imageable basic vocabulary. Vocabulary problems contribute substantially to language-minority students' problems in learning to understand text. García (1991) has noted a number of

general and test-specific vocabulary problems in studying the reading test performance of grade 5 and 6 Spanish-speaking children.

Cummins (1984, 1994) makes an interesting distinction between knowledge of surface vocabulary and knowledge of the cognitive vocabulary required for school achievement. Our observations indicate that many teachers of language-minority students stress surface aspects of language, such as high-frequency nouns, verbs, and adjectives, and standard conversational components. However, we wish to make a distinction between what is typically taught and a more basic, generic, and conceptual type of vocabulary that carries much of the logic of the language (e.g., negatives, conjunctions, prepositions, and other abstract words such as *few, some,* or *several*). Often students learn these words as part of their sight vocabularies, but they remain confused about the words' usage and meaning (Geva, 1993). Some high-frequency words are clearly more important and more difficult to teach and learn than others. These words are often glossed over by teachers and consequently misunderstood by language-minority students during reading.

3. Considering larger contexts. In spite of a frequent emphasis on holistic learning that features keeping that which is to be learned in a meaningful context, an instructional focus for language-minority students is often on accumulating the meanings of isolated words. Teachers perceive the students' main problem to be simply one of not knowing enough words. It is not surprising that students think this as well. No one would disagree that these students need to know more words, but it is the concentration primarily on individual words that may have rather unfortunate consequences. For example, in a typical reading session, the teacher stops students at a word, asks for its meaning, tells the meaning if necessary, has the students repeat the word once or more, and continues in this manner throughout the text. Students soon learn to grind down mercilessly on words and, meanwhile, lose all sense of the context, further application, and ownership of the words on which they have worked so hard. This tedious treatment of word meaning can decrease fluency and impede comprehension. When an emphasis on ungeneralizable words is coupled with a neglect of the contexts in which they occur, students begin to concentrate on minutia and ignore the meaning of the text as a whole. Lee (1984) has demonstrated that language-minority students show a lack of attention to the larger context. Because the strategy of predicting relies heavily on the ability to use context, it is not surprising that these students have trouble with predicting as well (Harris, 1982).

4. Determining important and unimportant aspects of text. Unless students are able to consider the context of the words they read, they are unlikely to recognize the most important aspects of the text. Determining importance has been identified as a crucial reading strategy (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991). Language-minority students are surrounded by a conglomeration of information just waiting to be learned. Moreover, students tend to focus on highly noticeable but trivial aspects of a text (Hidi & Anderson, 1987). To motivate students to speak, teachers may inadvertently underemphasize importance. For example, in several middle school classes where we observed teachers and students reading a passage on mummies, the teachers encouraged lengthy discussions about the fact that Egyptian embalmers pulled a dead person's brains out through the nose, but initiated no discussions about the cultural and religious significance of the mummification process that was featured in the text. Attending to "seductive details" (Garner, Gillingham, & White, 1989) and, consequently, ignoring author importance in texts could perpetuate students' reading problems. With so much input and no model of what is more or less important, what students learn from what they read is often scattered and of limited applicability. Consequently, remembering and transferring what is learned about reading becomes doubly difficult.

5. Elaborating responses. The problems previously described make it understandable that language-minority students tend to respond in very few words. When prompted to say more, they commonly add as little as possible. Because the students rarely put all of what they have said together, they end up with mere fragments of ideas. In school settings, which frequently stress being *right*, students do not

want to make mistakes or look foolish, and they may not be risk takers. They are often quiet and speak minimally rather than elaborately in instructional situations. As a result, they get inadequate practice in all aspects of spoken English (Ramirez, 1992), including discussions about what they read. Their reluctance to respond fully also limits opportunities for teachers to diagnose and help students solve comprehension problems.

6. **Engaging in natural conversations.** There is actually little chance for language-minority students to converse in English in the classroom. Gunderson (1985), in a broad survey of reading programs, materials, and procedures used to teach these students across several grade levels, found that most teachers taught reading in conventional ways and did not restructure their usual instruction to meet the special needs of language-minority students. Thus, one can assume that reading instruction is usually controlled by the teacher through teacher-generated questions that do not encourage real conversation. Allington (1994) has pointed out that only in schools are people constantly required to answer questions to which the asker already knows the answers—an infrequent occurrence in actual conversations. Conversations in students' homes in a first and/or second language have been shown to support the learning of a new language (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Pease-Alvarez, 1993). In fact, heritage-language proficiency and skills have been shown to facilitate English language and literacy generally (Hakuta & Gould, 1987; Saville-Troike, 1984; Troike, 1981). Yet, most teachers fail to capitalize on this in school, and may even counteract the educational benefits of heritage languages by discouraging students from using their first language and by neglecting to foster natural conversations in a first or second language in the classroom. In fairness to teachers, some attempt to *stage* what might be viewed as typical conversations among themselves and their students. In our opinion, these attempts are characteristically stilted and do not capture the spontaneous nature of real *talk*. What's more, we found natural conversations about the students' reading experiences to be virtually nonexistent in classrooms.

Suggestions for Instructional Activities

The issues listed above are teachable competencies. The following suggestions offer ways to teach these competencies to language-minority students through reading. The suggestions are based on our best knowledge of the reading-comprehension research that shows what works with these and other students. Most language-minority students receive their instruction from regular classroom teachers who have little background or specialized training in teaching English as a second language (Spangenberg-Urbschat & Pritchard, 1994). We hope that the suggestions will be especially helpful to these teachers. Because many of these suggested activities will be somewhat familiar to regular classroom teachers, they have the potential for helping teachers transfer what they already know about reading comprehension to language-minority students in a meaningful fashion. The activities share the characteristics of productive practices defined by Gersten and Jiménez (1994)—practices that (a) lead to high levels of student involvement, (b) foster higher order cognitive processes, and (c) enable students to engage in extended discourse.

Although we have not elaborated extensively on writing, we believe that the importance of connecting reading and writing cannot be overstated. Each of the activities can be extended to help students with their writing. They can be applied across many grade levels and many types of reading materials. The activities also allow students to take part in a variety of ways and at different levels of language experience. For each suggested activity, we specify those grade levels, from 1 to 8, for which it seems most appropriate.

1. **Shared reading.** Simply put, shared reading involves a teacher reading and sharing a book with students. Variations on this procedure have research support with many language-minority populations (e.g., Heald-Taylor, 1986, p. 37), as well as widespread support from reading practitioners. Repeated exposures to text, a frequent aspect of shared reading, is a common way to increase comprehension (Samuels, 1985).

We suggest the following procedure for shared reading with language minority students: Read a selection to the students a day or so in advance of when they are to read it. During the teacher reading, with the help of teacher modeling, students should be encouraged to react freely to the text and to clarify any problems. Later, when the students read the selection, they will be able to contribute to a discussion in more sophisticated ways. At that point, the focus on meaning is easier, because problems with vocabulary and unfamiliar concepts have already been addressed. Also, students can clarify any remaining problems, discuss what made the text enjoyable or interesting, and read with more fluency and expression.

The shared text need not always be read solely by the teacher. At any time, students should be invited to read if they wish or to identify words or ideas they wish to talk about. Although this activity is typically thought of as most appropriate for children in grades K-3, we have found that students at all of the grades we observed enjoyed and gained from shared readings, with older students taking a more active part with the teacher in reading to the group.

2. Vocabulary networking. Often called *semantic webbing* or *mapping*, vocabulary networking is currently a popular and effective way to develop vocabulary (Durkin, 1989, p. 335). In a semantic web, students graphically organize vocabulary from texts or other sources into related groups of words. The example shown in Figure 1 is taken from Farnan, Flood, and Lapp (1994, p. 147).

[Insert Figure 1 about here.]

Unfortunately, the webbing activity is often carried out as a one-shot collective exercise to which students do not return, or it is done too infrequently to provide the consistency needed for language-minority students.

We would like to recommend an alternative. We suggest that a variety of networks be kept on separate sheets in a reference notebook, learning log, display area, or central file so that all students can return to them, add to them, and share them over time. It is critical that the teacher allow time frequently or set a periodic regular time for students to do this so that it won't be neglected. The vocabulary base of the networking could be designed to better meet the needs of language-minority students. For example, a word that the students find difficult can be placed at the top of each sheet. This word might be one of the less-imageable words previously discussed. Students could organize meanings, examples, relationships, text references, and impressions for each word, drawing from their experiences, conversations, and readings throughout the year. Ideally, the students should make their own decisions about choosing, grouping, and organizing words and ideas instead of having those decisions made for them. Sharing ideas about words in this way not only increases students' understanding of particularly difficult words but also provides a functional source of vocabulary ideas for writing.

Another networking option could allow students to map related words that they obtain across texts on a particular domain, such as the American West or species survival. Students could also color- code words that are frequently repeated across texts as crucial to that domain. This activity can increase vocabulary and foster the intertextual awareness so characteristic of good readers (Hartman, in press).

The vocabulary mapping suggested here calls on some organizational abilities as well as an understanding of superordinate and subordinate concepts, thus it is most appropriate for students from grades 3 to 8.

3. Expanding contexts. Several procedures can help students become more aware of contexts for words. After clarifying a word, students can discuss what it has to do with the selection, other selections, or their own experiences. Students can also share how they use new words in writing. Illustrating vocabulary can put words into a context as well and, at the same time, encourage visualization. The

vocabulary networking described earlier can further contextualize words by associating them with related ideas. In all of these suggestions, the important learning goal for students is to move away from learning words in isolation to learning them in meaningful contexts. Even very young children can participate in these sorts of activities with easy texts.

Expanding context, however, applies to more than words. For children in grade 2 and beyond, difficult sentences and paragraphs, once understood, need to be thought of in terms of the rest of the text in which they occur. This might be accomplished by asking a simple and productive discussion question such as, "What does this have to do with the rest of the text?"

4. Predicting. This strategy requires a sense of expanded context and is particularly important when reading narratives. Hoping that students will predict when reading something that they do not understand is surely futile, so it is important that students first talk about their understandings of story segments before they try to predict from them. It is also important for students to revisit predictions after reading a story to see if the story bears them out. Their predictions can be written down, repeated, and/or paraphrased so that all of the students can understand and see them. Gersten and Jiménez (1994) document effective teaching that includes the use of such written cues. Making predictions is another activity that can be begun with very young children. So that students may become independent in this strategy, upgrading the use of predictions should move toward having students decide when they would like to predict rather than the teacher always asking them to predict. Prediction should be encouraged in a wide variety of texts, including informational texts that are narrative in form, for example, biographies, histories, or factual narrative episodes.

5. Imagery. Imagery, that is, visualizing or creating a mental image of something in a text, is believed to aid comprehension in students of normal intelligence in grades 3 and above (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984, p. 622), and could be quite helpful for language-minority students. Jiménez, García, and Pearson (in press) report that students learning a language have described the use of imagery. Associating English with mental images may be easier and more natural for many learners. One way to encourage imagery in reading is to talk more about illustrations. The illustrations in a text, however, do not always accurately depict or involve important aspects of the text. Therefore, it is critical that teachers select texts or parts of texts in which the illustrations are supportive of text understanding (Allen, 1994). Students could be asked to produce pictures of what they have read and compare the text with their illustrations. Later, students might compare a text with its author's illustrations and tell whether text and pictures *match*. A more sophisticated application of imagery might be judging whether the illustrations convey a text's most important, interesting, or difficult ideas. Students can begin talking about texts with supportive illustrations as early as grade 1, with the more advanced approaches to imagery being carried out in grades 3 to 8.

6. Text structures. Text structures are organizational options that authors choose when producing texts. These structures govern content to the extent that it will relate to the option chosen, such as cause/effect, compare/contrast, or problem/solution. Some studies have shown that teaching text structures to language-minority students increases their comprehension (Carrell, 1985; Hague, 1990). An interesting instructional procedure, shown to be effective with students from grades 4 through 6 (Anderson & Henne, 1993; McLaren & Anderson, 1992), that can be used with language-minority students involves teaching a text structure such as problem/solution, by teaching students to ask a series of questions about a text that correspond to the characteristics of its structure, for example, What is the problem? What is the cause of the problem? What will happen if the problem continues? How can the problem be solved? How else? and so forth. Students are then asked to generate writing topics, such as *sharks*, and to answer the same questions on the basis of their knowledge and/or research. Students use their own answers to write problem/solution texts. Such questions resemble the procedural facilitation scaffolds, or instructional supports for writing, described by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987, pp. 254-256). For older students, a similar procedure could be used with more difficult text structures,

for example, opinion texts. This activity not only improves reading comprehension and enhances language but also teaches students to generate important questions, encourages discussion, and clearly integrates reading and writing.

7. Questioning, identifying problems, and sharing strategies. All students need to feel free to ask questions, explain their problems, and share and evaluate ideas for solving those problems (Anderson & Roit, 1990). As pointed out earlier, fluent English is not necessary for such discussions. Students can work in a small group with their teacher to identify aspects of a text that make it difficult, then share and evaluate their strategies for resolving those difficulties (Anderson & Roit, 1990, 1993).

Jiménez et al. (in press) report that language-minority students are able to think out loud about the cognitive and metacognitive strategies used in reading. Anderson (1992) has capitalized on this ability in an instructional approach called *Collaborative Strategy Instruction*, which stresses thinking aloud about how to solve reading problems. The approach has been implemented successfully with both language-minority and English-speaking students from grades 6 to 10. With the help of teacher modeling, think-aloud procedures have been implemented with children even in grade 1 (Brown & El-Dinary, 1994; Pressley, El-Dinary, Gaskins, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, & Brown, 1992).

A strategy that proficient readers frequently use to help them understand text is to draw on related background knowledge. Nurss and Hough (1992) have noted that building background schemata is crucial for all readers. Although proficient Latino/a readers have been shown to use this strategy (Jiménez et al., in press), many language-minority students lack much of the background knowledge needed to understand English texts. With so much to know, providing enough background knowledge in enough time is an impossible task, and it is not surprising that educators are not able to accomplish it. A more efficient way to solve this problem may be to teach students to handle a crucial lack of knowledge in the way that the rest of us do, that is by questioning, identifying the problem, and finding ways to fill gaps as we read (Anderson, 1994).

8. Text explaining. One way that teachers attempt to check understanding is to allow students simply to retell verbatim part or all of a text. This may be helpful for English speakers who are likely to know what they are saying when they retell, but it may be poor practice for language- minority students. Although these students are often quite good at retelling, they may have little understanding of what they have retold.

Instead of asking students to retell, we suggest that students always be encouraged to try to explain what the text means and to share and compare explanations with other students. Collaborative sessions in which members of the group contribute to the explanations are particularly helpful. As noted before, teachers could foster text explaining in students' native languages as well. This would not harm their English learning, and it would definitely enhance their comprehension of English text (R. Gersten, personal communication). We would suggest simple and consistent directives for students to initiate and facilitate text explaining, such as, "What does this mean?" and "Can you explain it in your own words?"

The activity can be made less difficult with the support of increased teacher modeling and decreased size of text segments. Students may move to larger text segments and more independent text explaining as they grow older and more proficient in English. Simple explanations of difficult words and phrases may begin in grade 1, with a gradual extension of the amount of text to be explained over the grades. From grade 4 on, students might explain more abstract ideas within text, such as seasonal change, photosynthesis, time and distance, atoms, or molecules. Although a teacher may wish to specify what students are to explain at first, it is more powerful to teach them to recognize what *they* think needs explaining in order to determine meaning (Anderson & Roit, 1990). The issue of determining importance and unimportance is related to this suggestion. As students improve at text explanations,

a natural upgrade is to ask students to judge the importance of text segments and to explain why they are important.

Not only is text explaining good for comprehension, it increases verbal elaboration and language flexibility as students share ideas. Text explaining also provides the teacher with a powerful way to assess whether students have really understood what they have read and to discover sources of confusion. For language-minority students, in particular, where so many forms of assessment are considered culturally unfair, such informal assessment is needed (García, 1991).

9. Conversational opportunities. Most people who are trying to learn a new language look forward to opportunities to practice it with a native speaker on a conversational basis. These are usually lively exchanges about social or other matters in which the conversationalists feel no discomfort from interrupting the flow of talk with language-learning questions, such as "How do you say. . . ?" or, "Do you mean. . . ?" The purpose of such talks is to exchange information and find out about language in a friendly, enjoyable, and unintimidating way. Unfortunately, schools do not provide these opportunities. Edelsky (1986) has distinguished between school-like language *exercises* and more *authentic* language, such as that used in conversations. Gallimore, Boggs, and Jordan (1974) found that language-minority children were competent at home where learning took place through group conversation, but not competent in school where the rules were clearly different. Many researchers (e.g., Anyon, 1981; Moll, 1988; Oakes, 1986) have described the nonconversational "recitation" approach used in most schools for all children at all grade levels. Throughout this report, we have pointed out that the home culture and the use of heritage languages at home and in school can enrich school learning. It is undoubtedly true that proficiency in a heritage language is largely built from natural home conversations. Goldenberg and Gallimore's (1991) instructional changes in a school with young Hispanic children seems to have been successful in large part because of the strong involvement of the children's parents in their literacy learning.

The kind of teacher/student collaborative reading sessions reported by Anderson and Roit (1993) encourage conversational opportunities. This teacher-development effort moves away from teacher-controlled, teacher-questioning sessions to sessions in which students read and ask each other general but critical questions that stimulate real conversation: What are we learning here? Why is this important? What did I like best about it and why? What are the opinions about this? What is most interesting? What else would I like to find out? In other words, the students are engaging in the kinds of conversations that adults engage in about their reading experiences. An added advantage of these kinds of questions is that they can be applied consistently and effectively across any number of texts. Several researchers (e.g., Gersten & Jiménez, 1994) have called for the use of consistent language in teaching language-minority students. As these questions move into the hands of the students, they lead to lively and realistic conversational practice about reading and language. A conversation about a story might involve students' talking about how they might solve a character's problem, how they might carry out a character's plans, or what has happened in their lives that is similar to an event in the story they have read. The teacher could be involved in these talks as well, but only as another conversationalist. The intention here is not to tell students what to say to each other, but to encourage natural conversations and to allow them to happen.

Many conversations, of course, occur between only two people, so there should be opportunities for pairs of students to converse. This reduces group exposure, which promises less of a tendency to withdraw on the part of some students. Further, these conversations need not always be between a good and poor English speaker. Two students with poorer English can benefit from English conversational practice in which they share problems, solutions, and information, and clearly teach each other because they know different aspects of English. The challenge of such conversational opportunities is to implement them without their degenerating into stilted, teacher-controlled, and preplanned conversations. In short, ideal conversational practice should be natural, open, and freewheeling.

10. Culturally familiar informational texts. Educators are beginning to realize the need to consider and integrate students' cultures into teaching. Goldenberg and Gallimore (1991) have done this by integrating local cultural knowledge and research knowledge. In doing so, they have been particularly successful in involving parents in their children's education. Moll and Greenberg (1990) report the successes of a teacher who brought parental expertise into the classroom to help children learn. Au and Jordan (1981) enhanced Hawaiian children's literacy learning with an interaction style that was similar to the story telling style of the children's culture. Perhaps the most popular approach to including the culture of language-minority students is the use of culturally familiar reading materials. Comprehension has been enhanced in both young and adult readers when the texts they read contained culturally familiar content (e.g., Rigg, 1986; Steffenson, Joag-dev, & Anderson, 1979).

Care must be taken, however, in the selection of multicultural materials. School basal and other reading materials that are chosen specifically for ethnic representation often illustrate rather sophisticated aspects of a culture with which many language-minority students actually have had little experience. In other words, although these selections could inspire pride, they may not inspire understanding. We are not suggesting that such selections be excluded, but rather that students also be provided with a relatively large set of short, simple expository passages that tell about common and definitely familiar ethnic experiences, for example, holidays, animals, and foods. Although the passages should tell of common things, places, events, and activities, they also should give interesting and enlightening information. Such texts can be drawn from children's encyclopedias, trade books, and magazines. Barrera's (1992) analysis of multicultural literature and Allen's (1994) suggestions for selecting materials for ESL students offer ideas for gathering texts. The students choose from these texts, read them independently, and tell the class what they found out and how it related to their own experiences.

This activity has several advantages. First, it provides some culturally familiar material that students choose based upon their prior knowledge and interests. Second, it gives students a chance to demonstrate their intelligence by sharing their own experiences and providing new knowledge to their peers. Third, and most important, it allows students to provide models for other students of at least three important reading strategies—identifying with text, reacting to text, and connecting text with prior knowledge. Later, students' own experience-based writing on expository topics might be added to the set of materials. In this way, students become authors and their works become part of the class collection of relevant informational materials.

In sum, the purpose of this report is a practical one. It has described a number of issues regarding language-minority students that many teachers have probably observed or experienced. It has also attempted to provide some relatively easy to implement suggestions for helping language-minority students to learn English. The suggestions, which emphasize cognitive strategies and collaboration, allow students to use their primary language, natural social skills, and cognitive abilities to learn to use their new language as they learn to read.

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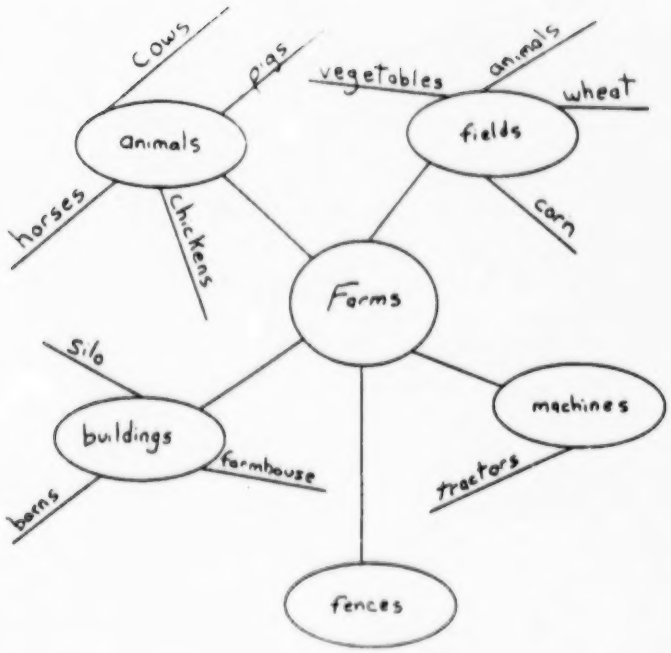

Figure 1. A Web of Framing

Note. From "Comprehending Through Reading and Writing: Six Research-based Instruction Strategies," by N. Farnan, J. Flood, and D. Lapp. In *Kids Come in All Languages: Reading Instruction for ESL Students*, Edited by K. Spangenberg-Urbschat and R. Pritchard, 1994, Newark, DE: International Reading Association. Copyright 1994 by the International Reading Association. Reprinted by permission.

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